

Spellbound by NeroAnne

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Summary:

After wandering too far into the woods and getting lost, Steve finds a hidden family that he hopes to be able to find again.

That summary is garbage but it's pretty much Day 1 of Stonathan week with the theme of "Blast from the Past."

Spellbound

-1698 Hawkins; Indiana-

“How could I have gotten lost?” He murmured to himself as he looked around the woods. There he was, Steven James Harrington, son of the magistrate Andrew Steven Harrington, lost in the woods of their small little town on a chilly February morning with storm-clouds quickly drowning out the blue sky.

All because he had woken from a dream in which a soft voice beckoned him into the very same woods and curiosity had gotten the better of him.

It was laughable, really.

Steven pursed his lips, already hearing the giggles amongst his friends when they heard news of him running wild. Thomas would be most amused and William Hargrove would probably even start a scuffle over-

A snapping twig in the otherwise silent woods had him spinning around in surprise. When he had entered this deeply into the area, he had found it quite interesting that it lacked the usual sound of fauna. There had been no birds singing, no insects chattering, even the wind had been still.

“H-hello?” he called out, the invisible air around him suddenly feeling warmer than before. He toyed with the sleeve of his pristine linen shirt, eyes darting about nervously. They settled on a bush, and his eyes grew wide as the leaves began to dance.

Doe-like brown eyes peeked out at him, and Steven relaxed, a slow smile gracing his lips.

“Hi!” he waved, “Hello, yes, I seem to have lost my way. Would you be most kind as to point me to-” he trailed off as the little boy crawled out from underneath the bush.

He was so small, couldn’t have been more than 12 years old. His eyes

were large and his smile was kind.

“You...are barely more than a child,” Steven said, his own smile confused, “What are you doing out here all on your own?”

“I’m Will,” the boy said, picking a twig out of his stained shirt, “And these woods belong to my family.”

Steven blinked. He stared at the youngsters clothing. They certainly didn’t scream of wealth, not even the slightest. His hair was unruly, his structure thin and underfed, could it be that he really came from a family that could own the woods?

“Well,” Steven began, unsure, “My name is Steven Harrington. I’m the son of magistrate Andrew Harrington.”

Recognition reflected in those brown eyes and Will’s smile dropped. His gaze turned weary. “You had better go then.” He turned away and Steven quickly cried out.

“But I do not know the way!” he glanced above them as the sky roared, “It...it will start to storm soon. Might I come with you to seek shelter?”

The little boy hesitated, glancing back at him.

Steven waited with baited breath, jumping as the thunder hedged closer.

Will’s shoulders dropped, “Okay,” he said, waving him over, “Let’s go.”

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They had walked deeper into the woods.

Along the way, Steven questioned Will about his lineage.

“What is your family name?” he had asked but Will had not given it, instead choosing to hum along as they walked.

“Is your father a reverend?” that question had elicited an amused

snort, but no reply.

It was just as the rain began to sprinkle down that they came upon a log cabin, hidden away in the bush of the woods. Steven eyed it, a brow raised. Surely, this couldn't be the home of the family who owned the woods.

"Come on," Will grabbed his hand, leading him inside.

It was small inside the cabin, but warm where the fire roared from a make-shift pit. They did not even have a proper fire place. How wealthy could these people be, really?

There was a gorgeous smell in the air, something delicious. His stomach rumbling reminded Steven that he had chosen to forego breakfast that morning in order to go on this little adventure and his cheeks reddened as Will turned to grin at him.

"Forgive me, that was very rude."

"It's okay," Will waved it off, ushering towards a table beside the fire-pit. He grabbed a bowl, bringing it back to Steven. "Here, try this. My brother prepared it."

"Thank you," Steven accepted the dish, inhaling the delightful aroma. He dipped the bowl over his lips, sipping slowly. His eyes closed as the warm washed over his body, his fingers curling over the bowl as the delicious taste soothed down his throat.

The sound of the door opening had both him and Will turning at once and Steven stared, his eyes wide, as a boy of his age entered the cabin.

His blondish hair was wet and he pushed it away from his eyes, which were narrowed in his direction. His skin was very fair, more-so than most women in town, and his cheekbones were prominent enough that they appeared aristocratic. He was holding a rifle at his side, his hand fisted around it tightly.

"Brother," he spoke, and his voice was quiet, but guarded, "You know better than this."

Steven lowered the bowl, glancing at Will and seeing the guilt in the younger boy's eyes. "It's not his fault," he spoke up, drawing those eyes back to him, "I...I wandered too far from my home. The storm was coming and I needed somewhere dry to wait it out, please don't be upset with him." He fiddled with the bowl, "He has been a most gracious host."

The brown eyes narrowed and he stepped inside the cabin, shutting the door behind him and setting the rifle down. "Who are you?" he asked, pulling off his soaked linen shirt. His frame was lean, with sharp angles and slender muscle and Steven had quite the trouble looking away.

"I," he coughed, "I'm Steven Harrington."

Brown eyes widened and then narrowed again. "You're Steven Harrington," he repeated flatly, "Son of the magistrate."

"Yes," Steven nodded and he watched as the brothers shared an uneasy glance. Not knowing what else to say, he held up the bowl, "This broth is amazing."

The older brother's eyes blinked and Will laughed a little.

"Jonathan is a great cook," his eyes sparkled, "Ever since our mom was taken, he's been the one to do all the cooking."

"Taken?" Steven said, and he watched as the little one slapped a hand over his mouth. A quick glance at the older brother saw that he had crossed his arms, his eyes shut in displeasure. "Why was she-"

"Eat," the older brother said, making his way towards a dusty old dresser at the corner of the cabin. "This storm won't let up until dusk and you will need the food in you for how much we will have to walk to take you back to where you belong." He pulled another shirt from the dresser, tugging it on before walking back to the door. He sat down in front of it, the rifle propped up beside him, at the ready.

"O-oh, yes, thank you," Steven took another loud sip, his manners forgotten for the moment. He sat at the small table and talked with Will as they ate, his eyes often going back to Jonathan's. Each time

he looked his way, he would find those dark eyes staring at him and for a few seconds, neither would look away.

Will yawned, the sound small in the cabin as the storm continued its downpour just outside. He wandered over to Jonathan, dropping his forehead onto the older boy's thigh. Immediately, Jonathan's hand began to stroke Will's dark brown locks and Will's eyes drifted closed.

Steven smiled at the sight. "He is very sweet," he informed Jonathan, who nodded, "It was very kind of him to help me out there."

"Will knows these woods even better than I," Jonathan admitted, "He knows the danger and if he had left you alone," he shook his head.

"I'm sure I could fend off a beaver or a badger," Steven teased but he lost his playfulness at the dark look in Jonathan's eyes.

"A coyote would have proven a more daunting challenge." Jonathan said bluntly and Steven swallowed.

"He was surprised to know of my lineage," Steven said, watching as Jonathan scoffed. "Have my family quarreled with yours? I still do not know of your name."

"Byers." Jonathan said and Steven wanted to vomit.

The Byers family. The only family in their town that had been accused of...

"So you know of us," Jonathan confirmed, "Then you will realize just why it was that he was uneasy when he heard of your name."

"Yes." Steven whispered, lowering his eyes.

"Your family's name precedes you," Jonathan muttered, a bitter edge to his tone. "The family you know denounced our mother as a witch." He smiled grimly, "and with no one to defend her honor, she was hung." He swept back Will's bangs, the younger boy's quiet snores echoing around the cabin.

Steven's stomach tightened. This was information he had known, but his parents had tried very hard to move past it and forget, especially

after how wrong they were proven *after* everything that had happened. "T-the trials have been over for years."

"Five years," Jonathan spat, "Is not long to forget pain. I thank whatever pathetic God exists that Will was only seven years old when it happened and still has enough innocence in his forthcoming years to find happiness," he shook his head, "I lost that the moment our mother, after hiding us in the woods, was dragged away by *your* people. She begged me to look after him, promising that she will always love us and protect us, even in her death...and that was the last I ever saw of her."

Steven swallowed hard, the shame in his stomach bubbling. He didn't know what to say. What could he say? Nothing...nothing would help this.

"We should rest," Jonathan said, the bite in his tone gone. He seemed just as sad, just as drained as Steven. "We have a long walk in a few hours and I have an even longer walk with Will after."

"What do you mean?"

Jonathan shrugged, "You will tell them," he said simply, "You will tell them of who helped you and they will remember the sons of a *witch*," he sighed heavily, "and they will come to drive us away in fear that just maybe, we are also witches. I need to find a new place for Will and I," he glanced upwards, "We will leave our woods and start anew elsewhere."

Steven watched him settle Will higher onto his lap. The little boy snorted, burying his face in Jonathan's shirt before he calmed. Jonathan's own eyes shut after and Steven could see the way the weariness eased off of his face as he slowly fell into slumber.

At peace, the brothers were a sight. Jonathan, brave and beautiful Jonathan Byers, protector of his little sibling, Will the gentle...the wise.

His heart resolved, Steven closed his own eyes, already formulating his plan.

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Steven chuckled, watching as the firefly Will was so intent on capturing flittered away, Will falling onto his front in a last effort to catch it.

"I was close!" Will cried out, grinning toothily at the boys behind him.

"You were," Steven conceded, "Very close, brave warrior."

Jonathan hadn't spoken. His eyes were fixated straight ahead, his posture tense and steps purposeful. The rifle was strapped to his back, intimidating and dark. It had belonged to their father, Will had whispered to him, but the man had abandoned them soon after rumors reached town about their mother practicing witchcraft.

The coward.

Will skipped along, humming and flailing his arms joyously. It was endearing to see that he had not been tainted. However...

"Jonathan," Steven spoke up, waiting until the blonde head nodded in his direction, "Do you suppose I could visit you again? I enjoy Will's company."

"You will not know where to find us," Jonathan replied.

"Oh, I'm quite astute," Steven smiled, "I am certain I can find your cabin again. I would like to get to know you so much more."

Jonathan glanced at him, confused. "For what reason?"

Hm, yes. For what reason?

Steven laughed, shrugging a shoulder, "You...intrigue me."

The words were simple, but the effect was anything but.

Jonathan's jaw dropped in surprise and his fair cheeks blossomed with color. They walked side-by-side, observing one another silently before Jonathan looked away.

"I have told you," he said, voice quiet, "Your family will come for us...we cannot stay."

"They will not," Steven said at once, "I will make sure."

They walked for a while more before the woods suddenly broke into a clearing. Things were slowly beginning to look more familiar and Steven smiled, relieved. In the distance, he could hear the faint sounds of yelling.

They were searching for him.

"Will," Jonathan beckoned his younger brother closer. He gripped the smaller boy's wrist, looking to Steve. "Keep walking straight. You'll see a tree with a grove settled in it. Make a sharp left out of the woods and you'll be seen by whoever is searching for you."

"Thank you." Steven said, watching as the brothers turned to go. "Jonathan!"

The blonde stopped, but didn't turn.

"I'll see you again." Steven promised.

Brown eyes glanced back at him, dismal and unbelieving. "Goodbye, Steven." And the brothers walked off, disappearing back into the woods. Steven waited until the darkness swallowed their silhouettes before he took the offered instructions, heading to where the voices were.

He broke out of the woods, almost running into Nancy Wheeler. The beautiful girl's bright blue eyes were narrowed.

"Where have you been, idiot?" she smacked his shoulder lightly, "Do you know how horribly uncomfortable it is to walk around these woods with so many layers on?" and indeed, her heavy lilac dress did look rather bothersome.

"Nowhere," Steven lied, smiling, "I got caught in the storm and decided to wait it out in the hollow of a tree. What have I missed?"

Nancy's eyes rolled, "Your father is upset. You have less than an hour

to prepare for dinner with the reverend and his wife.”

“Of course,” Steven said, offering his arm to Nancy. He looked back to the woods, eager to return at a later time.

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“You’re still here.” Steven breathed as he came rushing up to the cabin a few days later. His footsteps must have alarmed the boy inside, for he had raced out, rifle drawn. But he was there. They hadn’t left.

“When they didn’t immediately come after us, I figured I could come back to the cabin to gather supplies,” Jonathan said, stunned. “And when...when no one came after the first night...” he tilted his head, gazing at Steven.

Steven smiled, his heart full.

“You didn’t tell them.” Jonathan realized.

“No,” Steven whispered, aching to be closer to Jonathan, “No, never.”

“I...” at a loss for words, Jonathan merely lowered the rifle. “But...”

“May I visit you?” Steven chanced, “May I return? I would like to see you again.”

It took a while for Jonathan to answer, but it came in the form of his first honest smile. And what a smile it was. Beautiful lines on his face shifted and Steven felt truly blessed to witness it.

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Author's Note:

I struggled my ass off with this prompt. I suck at period-pieces lol.